



What You Need to Know About

The National Health Service Corps

Loan Repayment Program (NHSC LRP) In Fiscal Year 2003

How does the NHSC determine which clinicians will receive loan repayment?

In fiscal year (FY) 2003, NHSC LRP contracts will be awarded to eligible applicants practicing in the neediest communities across the Nation. Applicants practicing in sites with the greatest need have the best chances for receiving a NHSC LRP award.

How is community need determined?

Need is determined by using the health professional shortage area (HPSA) designation score. These scores are indicated on the NHSC Opportunities List found on our Web site at <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>. The higher the HPSA score, the greater the need. Therefore, individuals interested in applying for the NHSC LRP can maximize their chances for receiving an award by choosing sites with the highest HPSA scores. The HPSA score on the date the NHSC LRP application is submitted (i.e., date received by the NHSC LRP) will be the HPSA score used for the FY 2003 NHSC LRP award process.

When will NHSC LRP awards be made?

NHSC LRP awards will be made on an ongoing basis for eligible applicants whose applications are complete and who are working at an approved NHSC LRP site with a HPSA score of 14 and above, subject to NHSC LRP funding and site vacancy limitations. Complete applications from eligible applicants working at a site with a HPSA score below 14 will be considered after April 18, 2003 if funding is still available.

What are the NHSC LRP site vacancy limitations?

In order to distribute the number of NHSC LRP clinicians across a larger array of NHSC community sites, a maximum of two, new NHSC LRP 2-year contract awards will be allowed per discipline category (i.e., primary health care, dental health care, mental health care) for each community site. Within each discipline category, the following additional limits apply:

- **Primary health care:** no more than one primary care Physician (MD/DO) **and** one Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistant or Certified Nurse Midwife
- **Dental health care:** no more than one Dentist (DDS/DMD) **and** one Dental Hygienist
- **Mental health care:** no more than one physician psychiatrist (MD/DO) **and** one Clinical Psychologist or Clinical Social Worker or Licensed Professional Counselor or Marriage and Family Therapist or Psychiatric Nurse Specialist

If funding remains available after applying the above criteria, the NHSC LRP may allow up to four, new NHSC LRP 2-year contract awards per discipline category for each community site. Eligible applicants would be funded by decreasing HPSA score after April 18, 2003.

What if more than one employee at the site wants a NHSC LRP contract?

The number of vacancies on the NHSC Opportunities List may exceed the site vacancy limits for the NHSC LRP. The site must identify the clinicians to whom it wants the NHSC to offer NHSC LRP awards if the number of eligible clinicians exceeds the site vacancy limits.



What impact does the new Health Care Safety Amendments (P. L. 107-251) of 2002, reauthorizing the NHSC, have on sites?

In October 2002, President Bush signed the "Health Care Safety Net Amendments" legislation, which reauthorizes and strengthens the National Health Service Corps. As a result of this legislation, all Section 330 funded community health centers (including migrant, homeless, and public housing), as well as non-funded but certified Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and rural health clinics (RHCs) that meet the NHSC charges for services requirements will be considered as HPSAs.

Since these sites are now deemed a HPSA, they would be eligible to submit a NHSC Recruitment & Retention (R&R) Assistance application to the NHSC. If their R&R Assistance application is approved, these sites would be eligible to post vacancies on the NHSC Opportunities List to assist them in their recruiting efforts. It is important to note that sites that were not considered a HPSA prior to the Health Care Safety Net Amendments may have a minimal HPSA score, making them a very low priority for placement of NHSC Scholars or potential loan repayors. These sites may submit data to obtain a HPSA score that more accurately reflects the degree of need in a given HPSA and enhances the sites' opportunity to qualify as an approved practice site for a NHSC Scholar, or to compete for a potential loan repayer. Sites in previously designated HPSAs may use the scores of these areas.

The legislation also authorizes a demonstration project to allow for participation of pharmacists and chiropractors in the NHSC Loan Repayment Program. The NHSC is reviewing these and all other applicable provisions of the new legislation and is developing policies, procedures, and application materials to allow for their timely implementation. Please visit <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/Legislation/> for updated information as it becomes available.

How do clinicians learn of vacancies in underserved areas?

The NHSC Opportunities List posts information on sites and their recruitment needs. The NHSC Opportunities List can be found on our Web site at <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov>. **A posting on the NHSC Opportunities List does not guarantee a NHSC LRP contract award.**

Do all clinicians that take employment at a site on the NHSC Opportunities List receive loan repayment if they submit an NHSC LRP application by the due date?

No. The NHSC LRP is a competitive program. However, there is good news -- due to a proposed increase in funding the NHSC LRP hopes to fund more awards than ever!

IMPORTANT DATES

January 1, 2003	FY 2003 NHSC LRP applications available. Obtain an application by calling 1-800-221-9393.
January 1 – April 18, 2003	Awards made to eligible applicants whose applications are complete and who are working at an approved NHSC LRP site with a HPSA score of 14 and above.
April 18, 2003	Latest postmark date for sites to submit their NHSC Recruitment and Retention Assistance Application/vacancy request, in order to be considered a FY 2003 NHSC LRP Service Site.
April 18, 2003	Latest postmark due date for clinicians to submit FY 2003 NHSC LRP application for a new 2-year contract.
April 18, 2003 – Sept. 30, 2003	Remaining NHSC LRP awards made to eligible applicants whose applications are complete. Awards funded by decreasing HPSA score, subject to site vacancy limits, to the extent funds remain available.

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